

BLUAC Steering Committee
March 30, 2006 Minutes

In attendance: Doug Averill, Don Loranger, Bruce Peachy, Paul Mutascio, Mary Jo Naïve, Gina Klempel, Dale McMurren, Gary Ridderhoff, Shelley Gonzales, Buz Meyer, Steve Saville, Bret Thuma, Charlotte French, Kathy Robertson, Gwen Sutherland, Darrell Coverdell, Clarice Ryan, Pat Wagner, George Darrow, Craig Wagner, Chuck Gough, Elna Darrow, Leslie Budewitz, Paul Guarrant, John Bourquin, Edd Blackler, Sue Hanson

Chairman Loranger called the meeting to order at 12:07 PM

Minutes of the 3/9/06, 3/16/06 and 3/23/06 meetings were approved as mailed.

Treasurer Gonzales reported approximately \$880.00 in unrestricted funds. There are still funds set aside for the Government committee.

OLD BUSINESS:

Government Committee: John Bourquin reported the findings of the Government committee. After consultations with Ken Weaver, MSU Government Center, Susan Nicosia, former mayor of Columbia Falls, Montana Dept. of Revenue, Tom Reynolds, Flathead GIS and Flathead County Sheriff, the committee concluded the cost of incorporating would increase taxes 67%, in addition to existing County and State property taxes. Estimated cost of a city budget would be \$445,000, and does not include start up costs (city hall, etc). Cost of one police officer was estimated at \$85,000 per year. In round figures, for a population of the hypothetical city of 1,220, the cost increase per household would be \$780. Full report, including pros and cons, is available on request. Included in the report are the budget details, and Montana Local Government Profiles.

A straw vote at the meeting showed unanimous agreement that incorporation would not be feasible at this time for the Bigfork area. Edd Blackler moved the information in the report be made available to the public through the Bigfork Eagle, Lakeshore Country Journal and be posted on the committee website (www.bigforksteering.org) under announcements. Motion was seconded by John Bourquin. Motion passed unanimously.

Buz Meyer moved a big "Thank You" be given to all committee members who worked many months on this assignment. Sue Hanson seconded the motion. Motion passed with applause included. Committee members included John Bourquin, Chairman, Edd Blackler, Leslie Budewitz, Darrel Coverdell, Elna Darrow, George Darrow, Chuck Gough, Sally Janover, Jack Paulson, Clarice Ryan, Julie Spencer, Gwen Sutherland, Craig Wagner, and Pat Wagner.

Chairman Loranger thanked the Government Committee for a job well done and declared the committee disbanded.

Planning Sub-Committees: Shelley Gonzales reported that Flathead County is in the process of providing an outline for neighborhood plan submissions to the Flathead County Growth Plan. The outline will be available May 1, 2006. This will enable the committees to more easily conform to county guidelines.

Downtown & Commercial District: Paul Mutascio submitted the committee report stating that the committee found that the 2005 survey results virtually mirror the findings and subsequent Goals, Policies and recommendations of the original 1993 plan. He noted the 2005 survey reflected a high degree of interest in improving downtown parking, and ingress and egress to the loop. The committee offered the recommendation that a special "planned district" be established within the county's Master Plan that would incorporate specific planning and architectural requirements. The "plan" would be made part of the permit process and made available by county planning staff as part of the permit process. The report suggested the creation of an independent Architectural Review Board to review plans and proposals within the district and forward recommendations to BLUAC, the Board of Commissioners and other review governmental agencies.

Funding for these needs could come from additional permit fees, other taxing sources such as a Resort Tax levied in the special planning district. The Resort Tax could be used to support the new board, capital improvements needs (parking garage, trash receptacles, public transportation, sidewalks, bike paths, etc.). Full report is available upon request.

Bigfork Housing Committee: Chuck Gaugh reported for the committee. Median price for new homes in 2005 is estimated at \$214,450. Rapid growth can result in housing shortages for special needs groups and inadequate assistance programs for low-income segments. Population increase is estimated at 2,250 in 2005 compared to 1,421 in the 2000 census. The report covered housing starts from 2001 to present, median housing prices from 2001 to present, Rental units, Group Quarters, and Low/Moderate Income Properties. The report lists Housing Assistance Programs.

Information obtained from the Flathead County Planning Dept. listed 916 potential lots approved in the Bigfork area since 2000. None of the projects listed meet the identified needs for housing in the form of assisted living, senior housing, affordable rentals or affordable owner occupied housing. The report further identifies goals of Bigfork housing for the growth plan. Report is available upon request.

Local/Social Services: Gary Ridderhoff reported the committee has yet to receive the recommendations from the Bigfork Fire Department/QRU. He reported that the Flathead County Sheriff's department provides one deputy to cover the area of Bigfork and surrounding community, across to Somers and Lakeside. With increases in population in the large area, the deputy is hard pressed to service the entire area efficiently. He also reported that the Bigfork Library is in need of a larger facility.

Natural Resources/Environment: Elna Darrow reported the committee was seeking permission to include the Flathead County issue paper (available on the county website: co.flathead.mt.us) on water quality and open lands. She noted that at both public meetings held by the county planning staff that community comment was very focused

on protecting our natural resources and environment. The committee will further study how to protect and implement those goals.

Brett Thuma reported his ongoing research into the economic benefits of protecting native species diversity and quality of life, cultural/traditional uses of the landscape and the location and features of the environment in the Bigfork area. He provided maps, including aerial photos of the area, faults/earthquake faults, aquifer/ground water depths & floodplains, ungulate winter ranges, land cover (vegetation), topo of wetlands, and wildfire risk/fuels treatment areas.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Loranger entertained the idea of sponsoring a candidate forum for the upcoming BLUAC elections. Katherine Head, of the Bigfork Eagle, has offered to facilitate such a forum. Sue Hanson will work with Katherine to set up the forum in mid-April.

Clarice Ryan asked for help with the upcoming elections. Elna Darrow will work with Clarice on election details.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:30 pm

Sue Hanson
Secretary